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Positive List violation by Australian barley

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Report Highlights:

MAFF has issued a directive to the importer to cancel distribution for food use of a shipment of Australian barley after it was found to be over the standard pesticide residue level for the chemicals Amitraz and Fipronil. The chemicals were found as a result of testing by the trader, not as the result of a monitoring test under the Positive List system.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Tokyo [JA1]
[JA]

Summary

MAFF has rejected a shipment of Australian barley after it was found to be over the standard pesticide residue level for the chemicals Amitraz and Fipronil. The chemicals were found as a result of testing by the trader, not as the result of a monitoring test under the Positive List system. Therefore, it is likely that MHLW will not take any action based on this finding, i.e. the monitoring rate of Australian barley may remain same. Since the implementation of the Positive List, there have been a number of violations by fresh produce, processed products, nuts and others; however there have been only a few violations by bulk commodities. In the summer of 2006, a pesticide, Fenitrothion, was detected in Australian canola. After two more violations followed in early 2007, Australian canola was put under an inspection order.

Media Report**YOMIURI May 14, 2008 19:15**

(Provisional translation)

It was learned that MAFF has canceled purchasing Australian barley because it was found that pesticides exceeding the standard level were detected on about 20,000 tons of barley, which Mitsubishi Corp imported from Australia in April. It is the first time that MAFF has canceled the purchase of barley, which it had planned to buy.

According to MAFF and Mitsubishi Corp., the pesticides detected were AMITRAZ (Standard Level: 0.02ppm) and FIPRONIL (Standard Level: 0.02ppm). Apart from the test that the quarantine station conducts on barley, MAFF makes it mandatory for importers to conduct a test for 225 kinds of pesticide residues. In this test, two kinds of pesticide were detected. The amounts detected were more than three times the standard level, respectively.

Mitsubishi Corp. reported after a shipment of Australian barley was found to be over the standard pesticide residue level for Amitraz and Fipronil, MAFF canceled its purchase. As barley is a state-trading commodity, MAFF purchases via a trading firm. The chemicals were found as a result of testing by the trader, not as the result of monitoring test under the Positive List system by MAFF on May 9. The 20,000 tons of barely will not be marketed.

According to MHLW, the number of barley imports for food reported in fiscal 2006 was 50, for a total of about 260,000 tons.

YOMIURI May 15, 2008 20:56

(Provisional translation)

Regarding the issue of two chemical residues detected in Australian Barley that were in excess of the maximum residue levels (MRL's) for Australian barely, an Australian trading firm, CBH (headquarter in Perth, Australia) stated to Reuters that 'there is a possibility that the sample for inspection was contaminated during transport', indicating the probability of contamination outside of Australia.

Usually, samples are sent overseas prior to export. In this case, 3kg of sample was sent to Japan. The residues of agricultural chemicals were detected as a result of the testing done by Mitsubishi Corporation, the importer of the barley.

Two pesticides were detected in this incident, Amitraz and Fipronil that are prohibited for use in Australia. The export division of CBH commented to Reuters that 'we are confident that the barley we exported does not contain any chemical residues.

Previous violation in bulk commodity

Though there have been numerous violations of the Positive List for fresh produce and processed foods. In first half of JFY2007, 619 violations were reported (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/foodsafety/positivelist060228/index.html>). However,

the only bulk commodity in to be found in violation since the implementation of Positive List is Australian canola. On August 2006, a pesticide Fenitrothion at the level of 0.02 ppm (JP MRL 0.01 ppm) was detected in Australian canola by MHLW's monitoring inspection. As a result, MHLW enhanced the monitoring rate to 50% for all Australian canola shipments (the current enhanced monitoring rate by MHLW is 30%). Two more violations followed on January 30 and February 15, 2007, and MHLW issued an inspection order to Australian canola for Fenitrothion. MHLW limited the inspection order to the exporter responsible for the violation in this case. As an 'inspection order', the shipment is held at the port until a negative result comes from the inspection laboratory. Also, importers have to cover the expense of testing in an 'inspection order'. As of May 16, 2008, the inspection order to test Australian canola for Fenitrothion is still in effect.